CHAPTER XVI

METHODS OF DELIVERY

The crown, the consummation, of the discourse is its delivery. Toward it all preparation looks, for it the audience waits, by it the speaker is judged. . . . . All the forces of the orator's life converge in his oratory. The logical acuteness with which he marshals the facts around his theme, the rhetorical facility with which he orders his language, the control to which he has attained in the use of his body as a single organ of expression, whatever richness of acquisition and experience are his—these all are now incidents; *the fact* is the sending of his message home to his hearers. . . . . The hour of delivery is the "supreme, inevitable hour" for the orator. It is this fact that makes lack of adequate preparation such an impertinence. And it is this that sends such thrills of indescribable joy through the orator's whole being when he has achieved a success—it is like the mother forgetting her pangs for the joy of bringing a son into the world.

—J. B. E., *How to Attract and Hold an Audience.*

There are four fundamental methods of delivering an address; all others are modifications of one or more of these: reading from manuscript, committing the written speech and speaking from memory, speaking from notes, and extemporaneous speech. It is impossible to say which form of delivery is best for all speakers in all circumstances—in deciding for yourself you should consider the occasion, the nature of the audience, the character of your subject, and your own limitations of time and ability. However, it is worth while warning you not to be lenient in self-exaction. Say to yourself courageously: What others can do, I can attempt. A bold spirit conquers where others flinch, and a trying task challenges pluck.

Reading from Manuscript

This method really deserves short shrift in a book on public speaking, for, delude yourself as you may, public reading is not public speaking. Yet there are so many who grasp this broken reed for support that we must here discuss the "read speech"—apologetic misnomer as it is.

Certainly there are occasions—among them, the opening of Congress, the presentation of a sore question before a deliberative body, or a historical commemoration—when it may seem not alone to the "orator" but to all those interested that the chief thing is to express certain thoughts in precise language—in language that *must* not be either misunderstood or misquoted. At such times oratory is unhappily elbowed to a back bench, the manuscript is solemnly withdrawn from the capacious inner pocket of the new frock coat, and everyone settles himself resignedly, with only a feeble flicker of hope that the so-called speech may not be as long as it is thick. The words may be golden, but the hearers' (?) eyes are prone to be leaden, and in about one instance out of a hundred does the perpetrator really deliver an impressive address. His excuse is his apology—he is not to be blamed, as a rule, for some one decreed that it would be dangerous to cut loose from manuscript moorings and take his audience with him on a really delightful sail.

One great trouble on such "great occasions" is that the essayist—for such he is—has been chosen not because of his speaking ability but because his grandfather fought in a certain battle, or his constituents sent him to Congress, or his gifts in some line of endeavor other than speaking have distinguished him.

As well choose a surgeon from his ability to play golf. To be sure, it always interests an audience to see a great man; because of his eminence they are likely to listen to his words with respect, perhaps with interest, even when droned from a manuscript. But how much more effective such a deliverance would be if the papers were cast aside!

Nowhere is the read-address so common as in the pulpit—the pulpit, that in these days least of all can afford to invite a handicap. Doubtless many clergymen prefer finish to fervor—let them choose: they are rarely men who sway the masses to acceptance of their message. What they gain in precision and elegance of language they lose in force.

There are just four motives that can move a man to read his address or sermon:

1. Laziness is the commonest. Enough said. Even Heaven cannot make a lazy man efficient.

2. A memory so defective that he really cannot speak without reading. Alas, he is not speaking when he is reading, so his dilemma is painful—and not to himself alone. But no man has a right to assume that his memory is utterly bad until he has buckled down to memory culture—and failed. A weak memory is oftener an excuse than a reason.

3. A genuine lack of time to do more than write the speech. There are such instances—but they do not occur every week! The disposition of your time allows more flexibility than you realize. Motive 3 too often harnesses up with Motive 1.

4. A conviction that the speech is too important to risk forsaking the manuscript. But, if it is vital that every word should be so precise, the style so polished, and the thoughts so logical, that the preacher must write the sermon entire, is not the message important enough to warrant extra effort in perfecting its delivery? It is an insult to a congregation and disrespectful to Almighty God to put the phrasing of a message above the message itself. To reach the hearts of the hearers the sermon must be delivered—it is only half delivered when the speaker cannot utter it with original fire and force, when he merely repeats words that were conceived hours or weeks before and hence are like champagne that has lost its fizz. The reading preacher’s eyes are tied down to his manuscript; he cannot give the audience the benefit of his expression. How long would a play fill a theater if the actors held their cue-books in hand and read their parts? Imagine Patrick Henry reading his famous speech; Peter-the-Hermit, manuscript in hand, exhorting the crusaders; Napoleon, constantly looking at his papers, addressing the army at the Pyramids; or Jesus reading the Sermon on the Mount! These speakers were so full of their subjects, their general preparation had been so

richly adequate, that there was no necessity for a manuscript, either to refer to or to serve as "an outward and visible sign" of their preparedness. No event was ever so dignified that it required an *artificial* attempt at speech making. Call an essay by its right name, but never call it a speech. Perhaps the most dignified of events is a supplication to the Creator. If you ever listened to the reading of an original prayer you must have felt its superficiality.

Regardless of what the theories may be about manuscript delivery, the fact remains that it does not work out with efficiency. *Avoid it whenever at all possible.*

Committing the Written Speech and Speaking from Memory

This method has certain points in its favor. If you have time and leisure, it is possible to polish and rewrite your ideas until they are expressed in clear, concise terms. Pope sometimes spent a whole day in perfecting one couplet. Gibbon consumed twenty years gathering material for and rewriting the "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire." Although you cannot devote such painstaking preparation to a speech, you should take time to eliminate useless words, crowd whole paragraphs into a sentence and choose proper illustrations. Good speeches, like plays, are not written; they are rewritten. The National Cash Register Company follows this plan with their most efficient selling organization: they require their salesmen to memorize verbatim a selling talk. They maintain that there is one best way of putting their selling arguments, and they insist that each salesman use this ideal way rather than employ any haphazard phrases that may come into his mind at the moment.

The method of writing and committing has been adopted by many noted speakers; Julius Cæsar, Robert Ingersoll, and, on some occasions, Wendell Phillips, were distinguished examples. The wonderful effects achieved by

famous actors were, of course, accomplished through the delivery of memorized lines.

The inexperienced speaker must be warned before attempting this method of delivery that it is difficult and trying. It requires much skill to make it efficient. The memorized lines of the young speaker will usually *sound* like memorized words, and repel.

If you want to hear an example, listen to a department store demonstrator repeat her memorized lingo about the newest furniture polish or breakfast food. It requires training to make a memorized speech sound fresh and spontaneous, and, unless you have a fine native memory, in each instance the finished product necessitates much labor. Should you forget a part of your speech or miss a few words, you are liable to be so confused that, like Mark Twain's guide in Rome, you will be compelled to repeat your lines from the beginning.

On the other hand, you maý be so taken up with trying to recall your written words that you will not abandon yourself to the spirit of your address, and so fail to deliver it with that spontaneity which is so vital to forceful delivery.

But do not let these difficulties frighten you. If committing seems best to you, give it a faithful trial. Do not be deterred by its pitfalls, but by resolute practise avoid them.

One of the best ways to rise superior to these difficulties is to do as Dr. Wallace Radcliffe often does: commit without writing the speech, making practically all the preparation mentally, without putting pen to paper—a laborious but effective way of cultivating both mind and memory.

You will find it excellent practise, both for memory and delivery, to commit the specimen speeches found in this volume and declaim them, with all attention to the principles we have put before you. William Ellery Channing, himself a distinguished speaker, years ago had this to say of practise in declamation:

"Is there not an amusement, having an affinity with the drama, which might be usefully introduced among us? I mean, Recitation. A work of genius, recited by a man of fine taste, enthusiasm, and powers of elocution, is a very pure and high gratification. Were this art cultivated and encouraged, great numbers, now insensible to the most beautiful compositions, might be waked up to their excellence and power."

Speaking from Notes

The third, and the most popular method of delivery, is probably also the best one for the beginner. Speaking from notes is not ideal delivery, but we learn to swim in shallow water before going out beyond the ropes.

Make a definite plan for your discourse (for a fuller discussion see Chapter XVIII) and set down the points somewhat in the fashion of a lawyer's brief, or a preacher's outline. Here is a sample of very simple notes:

ATTENTION

I. INTRODUCTION.

Attention indispensable to the performance of any great work.

Anecdote.

II. DEFINED AND ILLUSTRATED.

1. From common observation.
2. From the lives of great men { Carlyle / Robert E. Lee.

III. ITS RELATION TO OTHER MENTAL POWERS.

1. Reason.
2. Imagination.
3. Memory.

4. Will. *Anecdote.*

IV. ATTENTION MAY BE CULTIVATED.

1. Involuntary attention.
2. Voluntary attention. *Examples.*

V. CONCLUSION.

The consequences of inattention and of attention.

Few briefs would be so precise as this one, for with experience a speaker learns to use little tricks to attract his eye—he may underscore a catch-word heavily, draw a red circle around a pivotal idea, enclose the key-word of an anecdote in a wavy-lined box, and so on indefinitely. These points are worth remembering, for nothing so eludes the swift-glancing eye of the speaker as the sameness of typewriting, or even a regular pen-script. So unintentional a thing as a blot on the page may help you to remember a big "point" in your brief—perhaps by association of ideas.

An inexperienced speaker would probably require fuller notes than the specimen given. Yet that way lies danger, for the complete manuscript is but a short remove from the copious outline. Use as few notes as possible. They may be necessary for the time being, but do not fail to look upon them as a necessary evil; and even when you lay them before you, refer to them only when compelled to do so. Make your notes as full as you please in preparation, but by all means condense them for platform use.

Extemporaneous Speech

Surely this is the ideal method of delivery. It is far and away the most popular with the audience, and the favorite method of the most efficient speakers.

"Extemporaneous speech" has sometimes been made to mean unprepared speech, and indeed it is too often precisely that; but in no such

sense do we recommend it strongly to speakers old and young. On the contrary, to speak well without notes requires all the preparation which we discussed so fully in the chapter on “Fluency,” while yet relying upon the “inspiration of the hour” for some of your thoughts and much of your language. You had better remember, however, that the most effective inspiration of the hour is the inspiration you yourself bring to it, bottled up in your spirit and ready to infuse itself into the audience.

If you extemporize you can get much closer to your audience. In a sense, they appreciate the task you have before you and send out their sympathy. Extemporize, and you will not have to stop and fumble around amidst your notes—you can keep your eye afire with your message and hold your audience with your very glance. You yourself will feel their response as you read the effects of your warm, spontaneous words, written on their countenances.

Sentences written out in the study are liable to be dead and cold when resurrected before the audience. When you create as you speak you conserve all the native fire of your thought. You can enlarge on one point or omit another, just as the occasion or the mood of the audience may demand. It is not possible for every speaker to use this, the most difficult of all methods of delivery, and least of all can it be used successfully without much practise, but it is the ideal towards which all should strive.

One danger in this method is that you may be led aside from your subject into by-paths. To avoid this peril, firmly stick to your mental outline. Practise speaking from a memorized brief until you gain control. Join a debating society—talk, *talk*, *TALK*, and always extemporize. You may “make a fool of yourself” once or twice, but is that too great a price to pay for success?

Notes, like crutches, are only a sign of weakness. Remember that the power of your speech depends to some extent upon the view your audience holds of you. General Grant’s words as president were more powerful than

his words as a Missouri farmer. If you would appear in the light of an authority, be one. Make notes on your brain instead of on paper.

Joint Methods of Delivery

A modification of the second method has been adopted by many great speakers, particularly lecturers who are compelled to speak on a wide variety of subjects day after day; such speakers often commit their addresses to memory but keep their manuscripts in flexible book form before them, turning several pages at a time. They feel safer for having a sheet-anchor to windward—but it is an anchor, nevertheless, and hinders rapid, free sailing, though it drag never so lightly.

Other speakers throw out a still lighter anchor by keeping before them a rather full outline of their written and committed speech.

Others again write and commit a few important parts of the address—the introduction, the conclusion, some vital argument, some pat illustration—and depend on the hour for the language of the rest. This method is well adapted to speaking either with or without notes.

Some speakers read from manuscript the most important parts of their speeches and utter the rest extemporaneously.

Thus, what we have called “joint methods of delivery” are open to much personal variation. You must decide for yourself which is best for you, for the occasion, for your subject, for your audience—for these four factors all have their individual claims.

Whatever form you choose, do not be so weakly indifferent as to prefer the easy way—choose the *best* way, whatever it cost you in time and effort. And of this be assured: only the practised speaker can hope to gain *both* conciseness of argument and conviction in manner, polish of language and power in delivery, finish of style and fire in utterance.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

1. Which in your judgment is the most suitable form of delivery for you? Why?

2. What objections can you offer to, (*a*) memorizing the entire speech; (*b*) reading from manuscript; (*c*) using notes; (*d*) speaking from memorized outline or notes; (*e*) any of the "joint methods"?

3. What is there to commend in delivering a speech in any of the foregoing methods?

4. Can you suggest any combination of methods that you have found efficacious?

5. What methods, according to your observation, do most successful speakers use?

6. Select some topic from the list on page 123, narrow the theme so as to make it specific (see page 122), and deliver a short address, utilizing the four methods mentioned, in four different deliveries of the speech.

7. Select one of the joint methods and apply it to the delivery of the same address.

8. Which method do you prefer, and why?

9. From the list of subjects in the Appendix select a theme and deliver a five-minute address without notes, but make careful preparation without putting your thoughts on paper.

NOTE: It is earnestly hoped that instructors will not pass this stage of the work without requiring of their students much practise in the delivery of original speeches, in the manner that seems, after some experiment, to be best suited to the student's gifts. Students who are studying alone should be equally exacting in demand upon themselves. One point is most important: It is easy to learn to read a speech, therefore it is much more urgent that the pupil should have much practise in speaking from notes and speaking without notes. At this stage, pay more attention to manner than to matter—the succeeding chapters take up the composition of the address. Be

particularly insistent upon *frequent* and *thorough* review of the principles of delivery discussed in the preceding chapters.